

Inmate Religious Beliefs and Practices

Introduction

This Technical Reference Manual (TRM) on Practical Guidelines for Administration of Inmate Beliefs and Practices has been written to help chaplains and administrative personnel to appropriately facilitate the religious beliefs and practices of inmates within a correctional environment.

With the complexity of religious issues faced by Bureau chaplains today and the large number of religions represented in the inmate population, this TRM will help chaplains implement the mission of the Chaplaincy Services Branch in the institutions they serve.

The mission of the Chaplaincy Services Branch is to accommodate the free exercise of religion by providing pastoral care to all Federal inmates and facilitate the opportunity to pursue individual religious beliefs and practices in accordance with the law, Federal regulations, and Bureau policy. The staff chaplain will provide religious worship, education, counseling, spiritual direction, support, and crisis intervention to accommodate the diverse religious needs of inmates. When appropriate, pastoral care and subject matter expertise may be extended to staff.

The purposes of this TRM are:

- To accommodate the provision of religious worship services and programs for the faith groups represented in the inmate population.
- To provide guidance to chaplains and administrators in making informed decisions concerning religious issues that surface regularly, so that the needs of both the correctional environment and the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment are met.
 - To encourage consistency of practice Bureau-wide, given the mission and level of security of the institutions.
 - To provide enough information about each religion for readers to receive a general understanding of its basic tenets.

The TRM must be read in conjunction with the latest version of the Program Statement “Religious Beliefs and Practices,” other applicable Program Statements, Operations Memoranda, and specific directives that may be issued as needed.

The suggested recommendations and “security notes” in each chapter follow a “best practices” guide, which takes the correctional environment and the “free exercise” clause of the First Amendment into account. **Final program decisions rest with the Warden.**

As additional chapters on the faith traditions are completed, they will be added to the TRM until all religions that have been approved for practice by inmates are included.

Organization

The TRM follows the same outline for each chapter. The practical issues for each religion are placed in the front of the chapter, followed by discussions of history, theology, and recommended resources. If necessary, glossary and appendixes follow the chapters. The format for each chapter is:

Religious Practices

- Required Daily Observances
- Required Weekly Observances
- Required Occasional Observances
- Holy Days

Religious Items

- Personal Religious Items
- Congregate Religious Items
- Searches

Requirements for Membership

- Requirements
- Total Membership

Medical Prohibitions

Dietary Standards

Burial Rituals

Sacred Writings

Organizational Structure

- Location of Headquarters
- Contact Office/Person

History

Theology

Resources (if warranted)*

Glossary (if warranted)

Appendixes (if warranted)

A Table of Contents adds more detail on particular religions when this is helpful for readers.

Note: Exercise caution when identifying resources (written, audio, video, and electronic) for use in religious programs. In particular, information taken from the Internet poses risks because claims are often not verifiable. It is important to periodically check the Chaplaincy Services Website to find reliable, current resources.

General Considerations

An important principle for all religions is that inmates may not be recognized as having ecclesiastical/religious authority over other inmates (e.g., reverend, deacon, elder, imam, rabbi, priest...). The chaplain may call upon inmates to help carry out the faith practices or tenets of a religious group if the chaplain is not a member of that religious group and no contractor/volunteer is available. The chaplain may also authorize an inmate to act as a spokesperson.

The personal religious property items listed in each chapter are generally transferable to all institutions in the Bureau of Prisons. Additional personal items may be approved by the warden. Inmates need to be aware that additional items may need to be sent home when transferring to another institution. **Final decisions on personal property rest with the warden.**

Religious personal property is subject to search. Any search of religious property will be conducted in a manner consistent with Federal Bureau of Prisons policy. Sacred, religious, and cultural artifacts must be treated with respect at all times.

Personal electronic religious resources (e.g., Bible, Qur'an, Bible Dictionary, Concordances, language translators, etc.) are **not** authorized religious property.

Because gold is a precious metal and exceeds the \$100 threshold for personal property, gold chains and medallions should not be authorized.

Acknowledgments

This Technical Reference Manual includes the work of many chaplains in the Bureau

of Prisons. They have given generously of their time and efforts in researching, writing, and editing the chapters on the various faith traditions. Contact with some community religious leaders was made to ensure accuracy. In addition, several chapters were written by religious leaders of those faith traditions.

The following chaplains have contributed to this Technical Reference Manual: Ibrahim Aziz, Abu Ishaq Abdul-Hafiz, Jamaal Abdul-Rahim, Umar Abdulraheem, Jerry Bailey, Michael Brill, Brian Broome, Dickson Brown, Maryann Cantlon, Angela Church, Willie Crespo, Muktar Curtis, Joseph Deffenbaugh, Bruce Fenner, Joseph Fogue, Reynold Fujikawa, Ronald Gonzales, Dennis Grabrian, Madison Harness, Keith Harrison, Hans Hoch, Jacob Hoenig, Abdulfattah Jamiu, John Lamsma, Nochum Laskin, Kyung Hee Lee, Michael Longanecker, Basil Mihyar, Neil Milligan, Maryann Palko, Anders Pedersen, Keith Powley, Daniel Pulju, Mateen Sabree, Abdulrahman Sykes, Charles Smith, Marie Stelmach, Alan Urasaki, Susan Van Baalen, Hensworth Weaver, Alvin Worthley, Jimmie Wright, and Ridwan Yusuf.

The Bureau of Prisons is also very appreciative of the expertise provided by the American Academy of Religion (AAR). The AAR's vast network of academic scholars is extremely valuable not only in the review of this manual, but as a resource for the agency in addressing areas of religious accommodation in the correctional environment.

"I wish to thank all chaplains and community religious leaders who have contributed their time, efforts, skills, and dedication to make this Technical Reference Manual available for use by all Bureau of Prisons chaplains and administrators. It has truly been a team effort."

Susan M. Van Baalen, O.P.
Chaplaincy Services Administrator

Note: This Technical Reference Manual is written for the use of Bureau chaplains and administrators. It is not to be distributed, copied, or viewed by inmates.